SA Power Networks

Embedded Network FAQs



Contents

Document Control **1**

Abbreviations **1**

1. Embedded Network Customers **2**

What is an Embedded Network? 2

Who is responsible for the embedded network? 2

How is my connection metered? 2

How do I apply to install solar or a battery within an embedded network? 2

What are my options for choosing an electricity plan? 2

How do I transfer to an on-market plan? 3

What if I require life support equipment? 3

How can SA Power Networks help? 3

How can I make a complaint? 3

2. Embedded Network Operators and Electrical Contractors **4**

How do I apply for embedded generation installations within an embedded network? 4

What design and construction standards should I use? 4

What are my responsibilities to customers? 4

What should I consider before choosing supply arrangements for a new development? 4

Where can I find compliant software clients for dynamic exports? 5

Who regulates embedded networks? 5

What licensing do I need to install embedded generation? 5

Document Control

Date	Author
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Abbreviations

AER	Australian Energy Regulator
BAEN	Broad-Acre Embedded Network
CEC	Clean Energy Council
CER	Customer Energy Resources
CSIP-AUS	Common Smart Inverter Profile Australia
DMO	Default Market Offer
ENM	Embedded Network Manager
ENO	Embedded Network Operator
ESCOSA	Essential Services Commission of South Australia
EWOSA	Energy and Water Ombudsman SA
NMI	National Metering Identifier
SCC	Software Communication Client

1. Embedded Network Customers

What is an Embedded Network?

An embedded network is a private electricity network that supplies multiple homes or businesses within a site. These arrangements are common in apartment buildings, retirement villages, caravan parks and shopping centres.

Embedded networks sometimes occur as larger, more spread-out residential developments known as broad-acre embedded networks (BAENs). These can look like typical suburban estates, but the electricity network is privately owned and operated.

If you live in an embedded network, you are not a direct customer of SA Power Networks. Your home or business is connected to the site's private electricity network rather than directly to our distribution network. SA Power Networks does not own or operate the electricity network within the embedded network.

Who is responsible for the embedded network?

The party that owns, controls or operates the embedded network infrastructure is typically known as an embedded network operator (ENO). The site owner is not always the ENO and may appoint a third-party to undertake this role. You can identify who your ENO is by checking your electricity bill or asking your property developer.

The ENO may buy electricity from an energy retailer and on-sell it to residents and businesses within the site. The ENO and energy retailer are often the same entity or related parties and is possible you have one contact point for both.

How is my connection metered?

There is usually one main meter connected to our electricity distribution network. This is called the parent meter and has a National Metering Identifier (NMI) that can be identified in our system. The account holder for the parent meter receives the energy retailer's bill for electricity use and associated supply charges.

Your individual meter is called a child meter. It sits after the parent meter and measures the energy used at your home or business.

How do I apply to install solar or a battery within an embedded network?

You must contact your embedded network operator (ENO) first to understand what options are available. As the embedded network is privately owned, the ENO may impose restrictions on solar and battery installations. These may include limiting your choice to certain makes and models or retaining control over how your system operates.

Applications must be submitted by the person who is responsible for the parent connection point to our distribution network. In most cases, the connection applicant is the ENO and is responsible to enter into an ongoing connection agreement with us.

What are my options for choosing an electricity plan?

You can buy electricity through your embedded network operator (ENO), known as being 'off-market', or choose a plan from an authorised retailer, known as being 'on-market'. Your ENO must allow you to choose your electricity retailer, although not all retailers offer plans for embedded network customers.

- Off-market: Your ENO buys electricity from their chosen retailer and on-sells it to individual homes or businesses.

- On-market: Your meter is assigned a National Metering Identifier (NMI) and is registered in the electricity market. This allows retailers to identify your connection, just like a home or business outside an embedded network. You can choose an authorised retailer that offers a suitable plan. Electricity bills usually combine energy charges (the electricity you use) and network charges (the cost of delivering it). However, in an embedded network, your ENO may bill you separately for your share of network related charges. To avoid paying these charges twice, check that your retailer offers an 'energy only' plan.

Being an on-market customer does not mean you leave the embedded network. Your ENO's network obligations to you still apply. SA Power Networks is not responsible for your connection within an embedded network.

How do I transfer to an on-market plan?

Embedded network operators (ENOs) are required to become or appoint an Embedded Network Manager (ENM), who, can help you switch to a market retailer by assigning a National Metering Identifier (NMI) to your meter, to enable you to go 'on-market'. To learn more about how to transfer to an on-market plan or ENMs, visit the Australian Energy Regulator website.

What if I require life support equipment?

If you or someone in your home requires life support equipment, you must notify your embedded network operator (ENO). They must guide you through the process to register as a life support customer, keep the life support register up to date, and notify us. Your ENO remains responsible for providing the required notice of planned disconnections, as your home is connected through the embedded network rather than directly to our distribution network.

How can SA Power Networks help?

We can assist the parent meter account holder, usually the embedded network operator (ENO), with matters relating to the connection to our distribution network.

We cannot assist directly with customers within an embedded network. Your meter is privately installed and owned and is not recorded in our systems.

Customers with questions or issues relating to power supply, child-meter billing, meter reads or maintenance must contact their ENO directly.

How can I make a complaint?

In South Australia, embedded network operators (ENO) who supply electricity to residents or businesses are required to become members of the Energy and Water Ombudsman SA (EWOSA) scheme.

This means that customers can raise a complaint with EWOSA about their embedded network, if they have failed to resolve their issue with their ENO. For more information, read EWOSA's embedded networks factsheet.

2. Embedded Network Operators and Electrical Contractors

How do I apply for embedded generation installations within an embedded network?

You must apply through our Portal to connect embedded generation, including solar and battery systems. Applications must be submitted by the embedded network operator (ENO) or their electrical contractor using the parent meter NMI, as our assessment considers the total existing and proposed embedded generation across the embedded network.

Visit our Connections webpage to access the Portal and find information about the application process, required information, technical standards, timeframes and fees.

It's important that we understand the embedded network's long-term load demand and renewable energy strategy so we can assess future requirements and establish appropriate connection arrangements that support sustainable and planned growth. For installations involving multiple residents or businesses, check whether a joint application could reduce application costs and review our Cluster Rule for generators before submitting your application.

What design and construction standards should I use?

We strongly recommend constructing your network to SA Power Networks' technical standards to support safety and long-term reliability while accommodating customers future energy needs.

If responsibility for your embedded network is transferred to us for performance, solvency or other reasons, a network built to different standards may require significant remedial works before we can take operational control of the assets. These works could result in substantial costs and inconvenience to customers.

To enquire about accessing our technical standards, submit a Connection Enquiry via the Portal.

What are my responsibilities to customers?

SA Power Networks' supply obligations are to you as the embedded network operator (ENO) and end at the agreed metered (high voltage) supply point. 'No supply' or other customer supply issues downstream of our connection point are your responsibility.

You must manage customers’ expectations about future changes in electricity exports and demand, including new or larger solar systems, batteries and electric vehicle charging. Your network must operate within its contracted limits. These limits must not be exceeded without SA Power Networks’ approval.

Customer exports may need to be limited at certain times to maintain system security of the distribution network. Unless you develop flexible export capability, you may ultimately need to apply static zero export limits to electricity exported by your customers.

Additionally, ENOs should refer to the latest default market offer (DMO) determination published by the AER for required protections to embedded network customers.

If you have any questions, submit a Connection Enquiry via the Portal.

What should I consider before choosing supply arrangements for a new development?

SA Power Networks encourages broad-acre embedded network (BAEN) developers to explore arrangements where each property is connected to and supplied through our distribution network rather than through a privately operated embedded network.

Engage with us early to explore connection options that support reliable service while meeting South Australians' future energy needs. You can submit a Connection Enquiry via the Portal.

Where can I find compliant software clients for dynamic exports?

The Common Smart Inverter Profile Australia (CSIP-AUS) enables secure communication between customer energy resources (CER) and SA Power Networks. A compatible software communication client (SCC) receives dynamic export limits from us and coordinates the inverters at your site to operate within those limits.

Use the Clean Energy Council (CEC) approved client list or our Portal to identify a CSIP-AUS client that supports the inverter models and brands at your site.

Who regulates embedded networks?

In South Australia, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) regulates authorised energy retailers and exempt sellers under the National Energy Retail Law and associated rules. The AER also administers network exemptions for private electricity networks under the National Electricity Law and National Electricity Rules. To learn more, visit the AER website.

Embedded network operators (ENOs) may also be required to obtain an appropriate license from the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA). To learn more, visit the ESCOSA website.

What licensing do I need to install embedded generation?

You may be required to hold a licence under the Electricity Act 1996. The Essential Services Commission (ESCOSA) is responsible for issuing, varying or transferring licences to participants in the electricity supply industry. Refer to ESCOSA for further information on how to apply for a licence.